

CAREGIVER TOOLKIT

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ABOUT CAREGIVERS ALBERTA



Our mission

To empower caregivers and promote their well-being through support, information, education and leadership.

Our vision

To promote an Alberta where caregivers are valued, recognized and supported.

Alberta's only dedicated organization for caregivers

Founded in 2001 by a group of concerned caregivers, Caregivers Alberta strives to empower caregivers and promote their well-being by providing resources, mental health support, and education for people caring for family members or friends.

Caregivers are heroes, not victims, but even heroes need a helping-hand sometimes. At Caregivers Alberta, our role is to champion them and their needs during the caregiver journey.



INTRODUCTION

Caregiver (noun)

care.giv.er: a person who assists a family member or friend with challenges resulting from chronic illness, disability or aging

We're so glad you have this Caregiver Toolkit.

It may seem funny to start with a definition of the word "caregiver," but we think the reason we have to define it is quite serious. You see, the majority of Albertans who are providing unpaid care for people-in-need do not identify themselves as caregivers.

This is where it gets tricky - and extremely tough. If Alberta's nearly one-million caregivers don't recognize their roles, and the challenges that come with it, they won't seek the help and support they need to sustain the care they provide.

And, as our government continues to shift towards a model of care that places more emphasis on aging in place, and more responsibilities on the care partner, Alberta's caregivers need resources and support now more than ever.

Caregivers Alberta, and its Caregiver Toolkit, are here to arm you with the skills and knowledge you need for a sustainable caregiving journey. We know it will get tough and that caregiver burnout is at an all-time high. With resources, information and programs, though, we know it's a better journey with someone to care for you, too.

A Caregiver's Bill of Rights



I have the right:

To take care of myself. This is not an act of selfishness. It will give me the capability of taking better care of my loved one.

To seek help from others even though my loved one may object. I recognize the limits of my own endurance and strength.

To get angry, be depressed and express other difficult feelings on occasion.

To maintain facets of my own life that do not include the person I provide care for, just as I would if they were healthy. I know that I do everything I reasonably can for this person and I have the right to do some things just for myself.

To reject any attempt by my loved one (either conscious or unconscious) to manipulate me through guilt, anger or depression.

To receive consideration, affection, forgiveness and acceptance for what I do for my loved one for as long as I offer these qualities in return.

To take pride in what I am accomplishing and to applaud the courage it has sometimes taken to meet the needs of my loved one.

To protect my individuality and my right to make a life for myself that will sustain me in the time when my loved one no longer needs my help.

To expect and demand that, as new strides are made in finding resources to aid persons with illness, physical or mental challenges in our country, similar strides will be made toward aiding and supporting caregivers.

*Source: Jo Horne, author of *Caregiving: Helping an Aging Loved One*

TAKING STOCK

This is a personal assessment of where you are at as a caregiver. By regularly “taking stock,” you’ll be able to identify where you’re struggling to find balance and solutions.

1=Disagree

2=Somewhat disagree

3=Neither agree nor disagree

4=Somewhat agree

5=Agree

N/A=Not applicable

ACTIVITY		1	2	3	4	5	N/A
1.	I have time to myself.						
2.	I make a point of doing things for myself.						
3.	I have time to do my own work and daily chores.						
4.	I have trouble keeping my mind on what I am doing.						
5.	I have difficulty making decisions.						
6.	I feel overwhelmed with my caregiving role.						
7.	I have stress in my relationship with my care recipient.						
8.	I have tension in my life.						
9.	I feel anxious or depressed because of my caregiving role.						
10.	I feel guilty because I am angry at my care recipient.						
11.	I feel I am coping well with my caregiving role.						
12.	I feel scared when I think of the future.						
13.	I feel confident in my caregiving role.						
14.	I feel like I have lost control of my life.						
15.	I feel ashamed if I have to ask for help with my caregiving duties.						
16.	I feel that I am the only one responsible for my care recipient.						
17.	I feel I can leave my care recipient alone.						
18.	I spend time doing recreational activities.						
19.	I take vacations or trips.						
20.	I feel in control of my caregiving role.						
21.	I have time for my friends and family.						
22.	I have my sleep disturbed because of my caregiving role.						
23.	I have crying spells because of my caregiving role.						
24.	I feel strained between work and my caregiving duties.						
25.	I ignore physical pain so I can do my caregiving duties.						
26.	I am satisfied with the support my family has given me.						
27.	I feel grateful everyday.						
28.	I feel confident navigating the health-care system.						
29.	I feel healthy.						
30.	I feel I need to take care of myself before my care recipient.						

LATEST RESEARCH - A BIT ABOUT YOU

The Research on Aging Policies and Practice group at the University of Alberta released statistics and data in November 2021, highlighting the impact of caregiving on well-being and the economy.

YOU'RE NOT ALONE

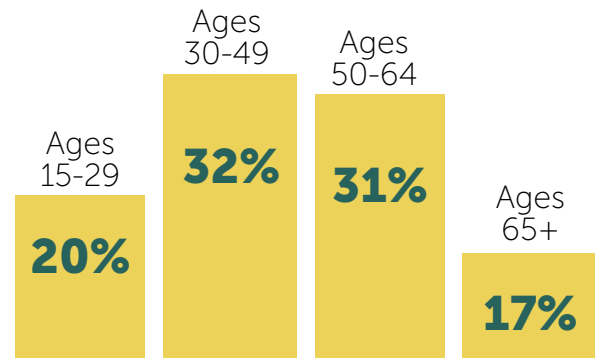


1 in 4 Albertans (26%)
age 15+ is a caregiver

929,000

Nearly one million Albertans are caregivers
(based on a 2018 national survey)

Nearly 2 in 5 Albertans (38%) have been a
caregiver at some point in their lives already:
that's 1.3 million people!



50% are female
50% are male

Most caregivers in Alberta support people living with:



Physical
disabilities

39%



Age-related
needs

23%



Cognitive
disabilities

16%



Mental illnesses
or addiction

13%



Cancer

9%



4 in 5 (84%) care for family members:

- Parents (44%)
- Spouse/partners (12%)
- Children (10%)
- Siblings (4%)
- Other family members (14%)

1 in 6 (16%) care for non-relatives, including
friends, neighbours and co-workers.

Most caregivers live with or near their care
recipient, but some live farther away.



Same
household

38%



Within a half-
hour drive

23%



At a
distance

23%

CAREGIVING IMPACTS YOUR HEALTH AND WELLNESS

1 in 2



55% are tired and 40% report sleep disturbances because of their caregiving¹

2 in 5



39% are overwhelmed and 42% are short-tempered or irritable because of caregiving

1 in 4



26% report that their health has suffered because of their caregiving

CAREGIVING IMPACTS YOUR RELATIONSHIPS



2 in 3 caregivers (67%) in Alberta are married or partnered.

To accommodate their caregiving duties, 1 in 2 caregivers (49%) say that their spouse or partner modified their life and work arrangements, and 2 in 5 (42%) say that extended family members provided them with help.



Nearly 1 in 4 caregivers in Alberta (23%) are raising their own children under 18 years, while simultaneously providing care to others, commonly known as the 'sandwich generation.' 1 in 2 caregivers (49%) say their children helped them, regardless of age.

2 in 5 caregivers in Alberta (44%) say that caregiving strengthened their relationship with the person receiving care.

Caring may strain other relationships or leave caregivers feeling alone and isolated:

1 in 2



52% spend less time with their spouse/partner and 54% spend less time on social activities or hobbies

1 in 3



35% feel that caregiving strained their relationships with family members or friends

1 in 5



19% feel lonely or isolated because of their caregiving

CAREGIVING IMPACTS YOUR CAREER

In 2018, caregivers in Alberta spent 15.1 hours per week on average providing care. That's about

647 million

hours per year of unpaid care in Alberta.



Using generalist cost methods, the economic value of caregivers' time is estimated at

\$12 billion

each year (based on the average income of home support workers).



Nearly **2 in 3** caregivers (63%) are age 30-64 (prime employment years)

58% More than **1 in 2** caregivers work full time

14% Work part time

10% **1 in 10** caregivers not working said it was due to caregiving responsibilities

1 in 2



51% miss days of paid work because of caregiving (6.5 days per year on average)

1 in 7



14% reduced paid work hours because of caregiving (12.1 fewer hours per week on average)

1 in 20



5% exit the paid labour force because of caregiving - often not by choice



Impact on Alberta's economy...



77.8 million fewer hours worked



23,716 caregivers left the Alberta labour force

CAREGIVING IMPACTS YOUR FINANCES

2 in 3



66% incur extra expenses (transportation, prescriptions and home modifications)

1 in 6



18% who have extra care-related expenses report financial hardship

4 in 5



85% who experience financial hardship use or defer savings to pay for extra costs

The financial impact of caregiving is more extreme for some Albertans. The lowest 20% of income earners earn an average of just under \$6,200 per year while the highest 20% earn an average of just under \$135,000 annually. Not surprisingly, lower-income caregivers have no choice but to be more hands-on because they cannot afford to purchase support services privately. Income inequality is increasing in Canada.



I WORRY THAT, WHEN I NEED TO BE A FULL-TIME CAREGIVER, I WILL HAVE TO LEAVE MY JOB AND LOSE MY INCOME.

- Caregiver survey respondent

CAREGIVERS NEED MORE SUPPORT TO SUSTAIN THEIR CAREGIVING

2 in 3



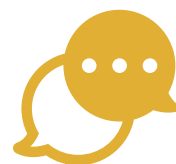
65% need financial support or government assistance

1 in 3



34% need home care or other support and 33% want help from health care professionals

2 in 5



43% need information and advice

MANY THANKS

The research data referenced here are based on infographics co-created by Jacquie Eales, Andrew Magnaye, Janet Fast and Sandy Sereda, sourced from Statistics Canada's "2018 General Social Survey on Caregiving and Care Receiving" done by Choong Kim.



WHAT IS CAREGIVER STRESS?^{*}

"Caregiver stress" is a daily part of life for caregivers. It encompasses the feelings of stress and strain experienced by the caregiver brought on by their tasks, financial burden, social isolation, issues navigating the system, strained family relationships and exhaustion.

While stress is your body's natural response to a real or perceived threat, it was meant to ready you for action and get you out of danger. Most sources of stress as a caregiver, however, are not things you can fight or run away from. They are usually challenges that you have to work through.

Some stress can be good; it can motivate you to focus on a task or take action to solve a problem. In this situation, stress is manageable - even helpful.

Other times, stress is unhelpful, resulting in you feeling overwhelmed or like you can't fix a problem. If you choose to avoid dealing with the problem, it can get worse, and create more and more stress. When that happens, it becomes difficult to concentrate, make decisions and feel confident. Physical symptoms like sweating, a racing heart or tense muscles can also start. Over time, stress can impact your health. You may have trouble sleeping, experience headaches or become sick more often.

COMMON TYPES OF CAREGIVER STRESS

Physical: The many roles and responsibilities faced by caregivers cause an increase in strain on the body.

Financial: Caregivers deal with the many costs involved in providing care. Some may face economic hardships such as lost work wages or reduced savings.

Environmental: Caregivers cope with major changes in their living arrangements and daily routines.

Social: Caregivers can be so committed to providing care that they sometimes cut themselves off from family and friends. They may experience limitations on personal leisure and social activities.

Emotional: All of the above factors can lead to intense emotional distress. It is not uncommon for caregivers to feel angry, depressed, lonely, afraid, guilty, embarrassed, frustrated, helpless or neglected. Feelings of depression can become a serious problem for some caregivers.

^{}Adapted from a 2010 report created for Caregivers Alberta by:
Ndidi Metuh, Reanne Lei, Sandi Lumley, Adrienne Coffin, Rebecca Li, Dana Larmour, Jingxi Ren*

CAREGIVER STRESS: RECOGNIZING THE SIGNS

It is important to be able to recognize the signs of caregiver stress so that steps can be taken towards relieving it. Some signs that caregiving may be putting too much stress on you include:

- Constant fatigue or lack of energy
- Withdrawal from family and/or friends
- Difficulties sleeping
- Irritability
- Frustration or anger
- Poor concentration
- Anxiety
- Depression

MANAGING STRESS:



Take action. Don't ignore the things that are causing you stress. Identify your challenges one by one, and create a stepped plan to deal with each one.

When you start feeling stressed, allow yourself time to go for a walk. Any kind of physical activity helps you reduce stress and improve your mood.



Prepare a list of people you can call when your to-do list gets out of control. It's okay to ask for a bit of help.



Share your feelings with people who can offer you understanding and support. If you need to talk with someone outside your own circle, your family doctor can refer you to a counsellor.

Find ways to relax. Consider trying yoga, meditation, mindfulness or breathing exercises. These quiet your mind, help you view problems from a calmer, more balanced point-of-view, and lead to more creative solutions.



Write your thoughts and feelings in a private journal. This helps you to identify your frustrations, evaluate your reactions and brainstorm solutions that work.



If you are stressed by money and debt issues, you can access the support of the Credit Counselling Society.

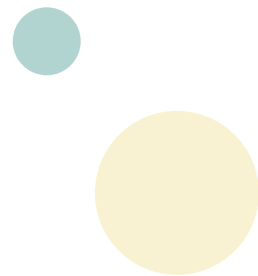
Schedule a one- to two-hour break each week to do a hobby, sport or activity you enjoy...or maybe even to do nothing. Respite care may be available to you.

Source: Edmonton North Primary Care Network

CAREGIVER WELL-BEING CHECKLIST

Below are some suggestions for improving your well-being as a caregiver. You may want to start with one item, then build up to a few more. Select the ones you feel will benefit you the most. Remember, if you don't get to your goal, there is no guilt; the items you choose are goals to strive towards as you are able.

- ☐ I am getting out/exercising at least twice a week.
- ☐ I am getting at least seven-to-nine hours of restful, sound sleep per night.
- ☐ I eat three balanced meals or four-to-five small, nutritional meals per day.
- ☐ I have kept up with my favourite hobby or special interest.
- ☐ I talk with, or visit, up to three friends or relatives weekly.
- ☐ I do something special for myself at least once per week.
- ☐ My legal and financial papers, including wills, are in order and available.
- ☐ I keep my regular dental and annual medical appointments.
- ☐ I attend a community caregiver group or support group, or speak to a friend or counselor about my feelings if I need to.



Adapted from the Resource Guide for Family Caregivers, Family Caregivers' Network Society, 2006



LET'S TALK ABOUT GUILT

Caregiving presents many new challenges, which can be stressful and can bring some difficult feelings. One common feeling that many caregivers experience is guilt.

WHAT CAUSES GUILT?

Guilt is a feeling that we all experience at some time. We feel guilty if we think we have not lived up to the standards we set for ourselves or if we think that we have done something wrong. We tell ourselves that we 'should' have behaved differently or that we 'ought to have' done better. Sometimes we may even tell ourselves that we must be bad people for feeling or acting in this way. We can experience guilt in many different ways:

- You may find yourself feeling guilty for all sorts of reasons, depending on your situation and where you are in your caregiving journey.
- You may experience many difficult feelings as you face the challenges ahead. You may feel tired, overwhelmed, sad, angry, frustrated, trapped and stressed. You may then tell yourself that you shouldn't have such feelings, and that this makes you a bad caregiver.
- You can feel under stress at times, which can lead to feeling more irritable, likely to snap or angry than usual. You may speak more sharply to others or withdraw from others. Again, you may tell yourself you shouldn't act this way and feel guilty for doing so.
- You often have to make decisions on behalf of the person you care for, such as: what services they need, whether they attend respite or if it is time for them to go into a care facility. These decisions may be difficult, particularly when the person you care for, or other people, question these decisions. You may then also question your decisions, wonder whether you are doing the wrong thing and feel guilty.
- You often find it hard to make time for yourself and to do things that you enjoy. You may feel you shouldn't take time for yourself, shouldn't be away from the person that you care for or shouldn't want to do things for yourself. Again, this leads to guilt.

THE GUILT CYCLE



DON'T "SHOULD" ON YOURSELF

We feel guilty, we tell ourselves we shouldn't act or feel like this, which makes us feel guiltier - and so on. This guilt cycle can drain our energy, and make us feel almost paralyzed and unable to cope. As one caregiver put it: we end up "should-ing all over ourselves."

BREAKING THE GUILT CYCLE: RELABELLING GUILT

Recognize your feelings. This is an important first step in dealing with difficult feelings. Since we spend a lot of time looking after others, we often don't pay attention to our own feelings. If we do look at our own feelings, we can look at what is causing us to feel guilty and try to break the guilt cycle.

Accept yourself. As a human being you are not perfect; you can and do make mistakes. Accepting that this is part of being human can help you find ways to learn from mistakes and move forward. Remember that you have many strengths; give yourself some credit.

Relabel the guilt. Guilt is paralyzing, it stops us from moving forward. Try to relabel the guilt. Instead of saying 'I feel guilty that I had to place my wife in long-term care,' try 'I feel sad that I had to place my wife in long-term care.'

Relabelling guilt as sadness or regret allows us to be more understanding of what we do, how we feel and the situation we are in. Through being understanding with ourselves, we can feel less paralyzed.

Watch out for the 'shoulds.' When you find yourself saying or thinking, 'I should have....,' or 'I shouldn't have....' take a moment to stop and reflect. Ask yourself, 'Who says I should?' Are you too critical of yourself? What would you say to a friend in a similar situation? Sometimes it helps to replace 'should' with 'it would be nice if....' For example, instead of saying, 'I should always be there to look after my father,' you could say, 'It would be nice if I could be there to look after my father. What are the ways that I can help?'

Accept help. Remember that, as a caregiver, you do not have to do everything. Accepting help does not mean that you are not doing your job. It is okay to share the care.

Look after yourself as well as the person you care for. No one can do the same job all day, every day (and all night, too). Taking a break gives you a chance to relax and recharge your energy. Give yourself permission to do things for yourself outside of caregiving.

Talk to someone safe. Sharing your feelings with others (whether friends, relatives, other caregivers, minister or priest, doctor, counselor) can help you to put these feelings in perspective or find ways of coping with them.

FINDING BALANCE IN CAREGIVING

Many caregivers have a hard time finding a healthy balance between caring for others and caring for themselves.

You can test whether your pattern of caring for yourself and others is out of balance by filling out the Unmitigated Communion Scale created by Fritz and Helgeson.

Read each statement carefully before answering. Think about whether you agree or disagree with the statement, and how accurately it describes the way you relate to the people close to you, friends or family.

1 (strongly disagree) 2 (slightly disagree) 3 (neutral) 4 (slightly agree) 5 (strongly agree)

	I place the needs of others above my own.
	I find myself getting overly involved in others' problems.
	For me to be happy, I need others to be happy.
	I worry about how other people get along without me when I am not there.
	I have great difficulty getting to sleep at night when other people are upset.
	It is impossible for me to satisfy my own needs when they interfere with others' needs.
	I cannot say no when someone asks me for help.
	Even when exhausted, I will always help other people.
	I often worry about others' problems.

Once you've finished, calculate your total score and divide it by 9 to get a mean score.

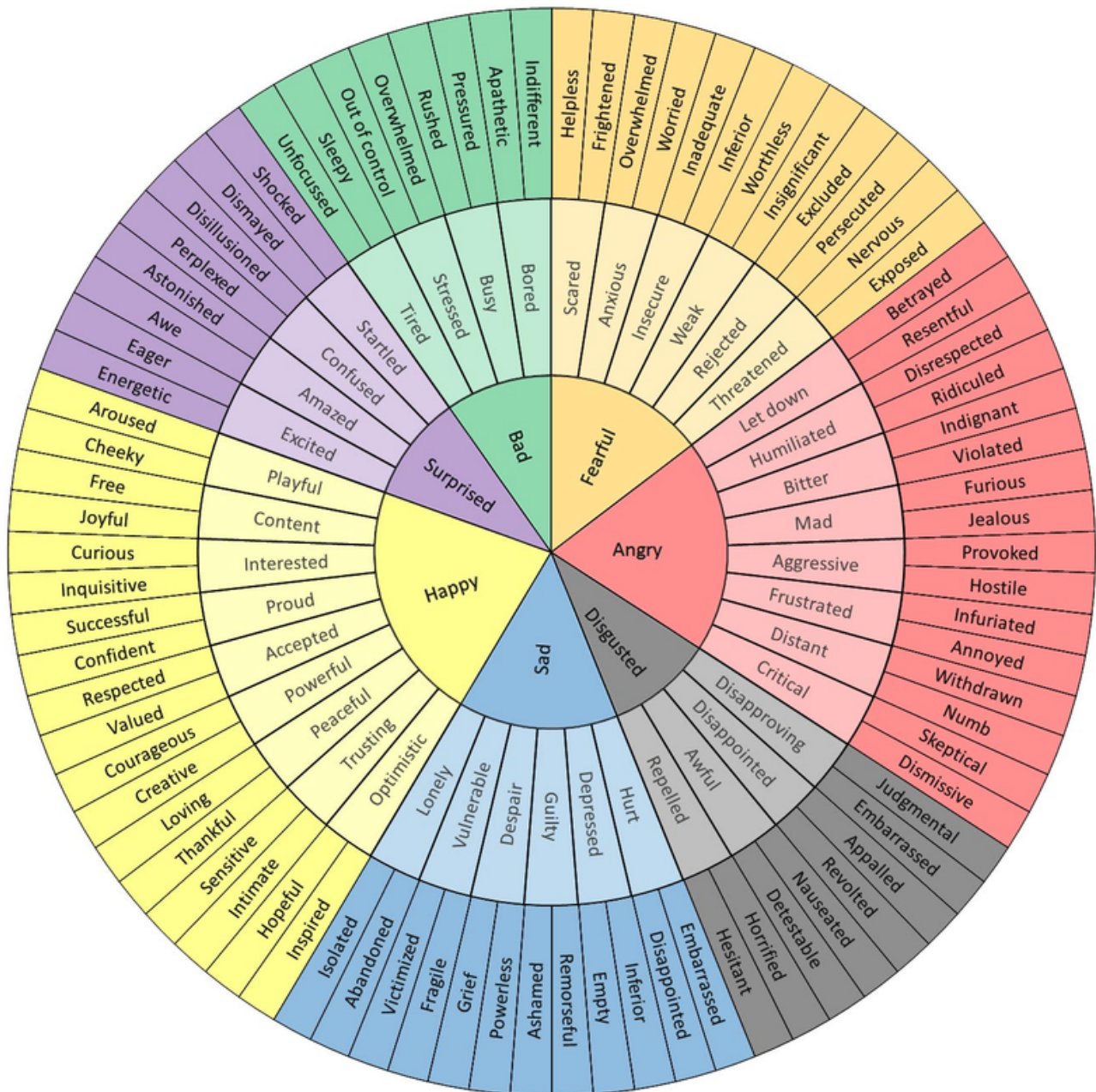
A score of 3 means that your caring is balanced. Anything over or under 3 indicates that your caring priorities require a re-set.

To give you a sense of what is typical, one study of 361 undergraduate students found that the average score for men was 3.05 and the average for women was 3.32.

IDENTIFYING YOUR FEELINGS

FINDING THE WORDS

If you've ever found yourself at a loss for words when trying to describe how you feel, you're not alone. The Feeling Wheel is a powerful tool. Using it to explore your emotions helps you build an emotional vocabulary. This expanded awareness not only enables you to better manage your own emotions, it also improves your ability to clearly express yourself to others so they can understand how you are feeling.



Source: Feeling Wheel from Willcox, Gloria (1982): "The Feeling Wheel: A Tool for Expanding Awareness of Emotions and Increasing Spontaneity and Intimacy"



TAKING CARE OF YOURSELF

As caregivers, we are often told it's important to take time for self-care. But, what is it? Self-care is anything we can do to take care of ourselves; something just for us. It is not the things we have to do (like work, studying, errands, housework, caregiving). And, it most certainly is not selfish. What is it? Self-care is essential to our well-being and the sustainability of our caregiving journey.

Self-care includes taking care of ourselves:

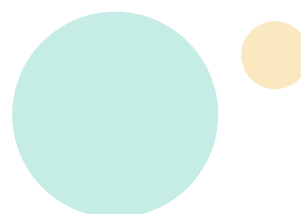
- Physically (health and wellness)
- Psychologically (stress reduction)
- Emotionally
- Spiritually

Self-care can be done alone or with the help of professionals, groups, instructors, family, counselors or even with books, classes and the internet. Caregivers often see self-care as selfish and say things like, "There's no time; I'm too busy." As caregivers, we often put ourselves last. But, if we don't take the time to care for ourselves, we could be the next patient - and what then? No one can give care all of the time. We all need balance in our lives.

101 WAYS TO TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF AND REDUCE STRESS

1. Get up 15 minutes earlier (or later)
2. Prepare for the morning the night before
3. Avoid tight-fitting clothes
4. Avoid relying on chemical aids
5. Set appointments ahead of time
6. Don't rely on your memory...write it down
7. Practice preventative maintenance
8. Make duplicate keys
9. Say 'no' more often
10. Set priorities in your life
11. Avoid negative people
12. Use time wisely
13. Simplify meal times
14. Always make copies of important papers
15. Anticipate your needs
16. Repair anything that doesn't work properly
17. Ask for help with the jobs you dislike
18. Break large tasks into bite size portions
19. Look at problems as challenges
20. Look at challenges differently
21. Unclutter your life
22. Smile
23. Be prepared for rain
24. Tickle a baby
25. Pet a friendly dog or cat
26. Don't know all the answers
27. Look for the silver lining
28. Say something nice to someone
29. Teach a kid to fly a kite
30. Walk in the rain
31. Schedule play time into every day
32. Take a bubble bath
33. Be aware of the decisions you make
34. Believe in yourself
35. Stop saying negative things to yourself
36. Visualize yourself winning

37. Develop your sense of humor
38. Stop thinking tomorrow will be a better today
39. Have goals for yourself
40. Dance a jig
41. Say hello to a stranger
42. Ask a friend for a hug
43. Look up at the stars
44. Practice breathing slowly
45. Learn to whistle a tune
46. Read a poem
47. Listen to a symphony
48. Watch a ballet
49. Read a story curled up in bed
50. Do a brand new thing
51. Stop a bad habit
52. Buy yourself a flower
53. Take time to smell the flowers
54. Find support from others
55. Ask someone to be your "vent partner"
56. Do it today
57. Work at being cheerful and optimistic
58. Put safety first
59. Do everything in moderation
60. Pay attention to your appearance
61. Strive for excellence NOT perfection
62. Stretch your limits a little each day
63. Look at a work of art
64. Hum a jingle
65. Maintain your weight
66. Plant a tree
67. Feed the birds
68. Practice grace under pressure
69. Stand up and stretch
70. Always have a plan "B"
71. Learn a new doodle
72. Memorize a joke
73. Be responsible for your feelings
74. Learn to meet your own needs
75. Become a better listener
76. Know your limitations and let others know
77. Tell someone to have a good day in pig Latin
78. Throw a paper airplane
79. Exercise every day
80. Learn the words to a new song
81. Get to work early
82. Clean out one closet
83. Play patty cake with a toddler
84. Go on a picnic
85. Take a different route to work
86. Leave work early (with permission)
87. Put air freshener in your car
88. Watch a movie and eat popcorn
89. Write a note to a far away friend
90. Go to a ball game and scream
91. Cook a meal and eat it by candlelight
92. Recognize the importance of unconditional love
93. Remember that stress is an attitude
94. Keep a journal
95. Practice a monster smile
96. Remember you always have options
97. Have a support network of people, places and things
98. Quit trying to "fix" other people
99. Get enough sleep
100. Talk less and listen more
101. Freely praise other people



BUILDING YOUR RESILIENCE

Resilience is the ability to bounce back from hard times, and to adapt to new situations and challenges in healthy ways. Many people gain comfort in knowing they can rely on their abilities and strengths to see them through life's difficult transitions. Most health professionals now recognize resiliency is a critical factor in determining coping skills and future behavior.

10 CHARACTERISTICS OF RESILIENCE*

Perceptiveness. You understand people and situations, and you can question what is happening in your family, school, or community.

Service. You give of yourself to others or to a cause that you believe in.

Independence. You can separate yourself from your family troubles and are confident that you can make your way in the world.

Optimism. You have hope for a bright future for yourself and the world.

Connection. You can seek out support from others and form caring and positive relationships.

Self-motivation. You have the drive to fulfill your dreams and goals.

Creativity. You can express your experiences in a constructive and helpful way.

Spirituality. You have faith in something greater than yourself.

Sense of humour. When appropriate, you can see the funny side of the world and your circumstances, and use this ability to put things into perspective.

Morality. When you make a decision, you use the information you have about the situation and you listen to your conscience (your sense of right and wrong).



*Source: <https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/assets/info/amh/if-amh-grade9-lesson3.pdf>

STRESS-REDUCTION PLAN TO BUILD RESILIENCE

1. I will identify a problem or stressor and make it manageable. I will work on one problem at a time. Starting with:


2. I will avoid things that bring me down and cause me stress, including these specific people, places or things.

3. I will let some things go because I realize my energy is wasted worrying about things I can't fix. I will try to focus on problems I can change and let go of those I cannot change, including:

4. I will take care of my body through exercise. The things I would like to do include:

5. I will try to relax. I can fool my body to "relax" and de-stress by trying these things:

- Deep breathing
- Imagine a peaceful place



Almost everything will work again if you unplug it
for a few minutes, including you.

— Anne Lamott

6. I will eat well. I know that having a healthy body helps people deal with stress better. I will maintain my health by doing these things:

- Eat a good breakfast
- Skip fewer meals
- Drink fewer sweetened drinks
- Drink less alcohol

7. At night, I will get the sleep I need. I will use another time of day to deal with things that bring me stress and use that time for letting go of negative thoughts and feelings. I will try to go to bed at . I will stop doing the following activities in bed:

- Watching TV or playing computer games
- Talking on the phone or an electronic device to friends
- Worrying - instead I will keep a notepad close by and jot down one or two concerns

8. I will manage my emotions by taking a break. For me that would mean:

- Reading a book
- Watching TV

9. I will release my emotions. I will try to let my worries go rather than letting them build up over time.

- I will meditate and/or journal
- I will laugh more or let myself cry
- If I am overwhelmed with problems, I will work on them one at a time
- I will talk to a good friend who will listen or give good advice

10. I will contribute to making a better world. You already do this by caregiving! You may also want to make a difference and plan to (if time and energy permits):

- Help a family member by:
- Volunteer in the community by:
- Help the environment, nature or animals by:
- I will express myself creatively (art, music, creative writing or dramatic arts).



Adapted from: Kenneth R. Ginsburg, MD, MS, ME, FAAP

FINDING RESOURCES

A guide to get you started

Finding resources can be challenging. There are hundreds of programs and services that can support caregivers in Alberta. Rather than listing them all, this guide will get you started finding people to help you navigate the system and find support.

There are many places to start looking for resources. The organizations listed below help people connect with appropriate, local resources. You may want to try speaking to a social worker, transition coordinator, case manager or outreach worker.

Caregivers Alberta 1-877-453-5088	Caregivers Alberta have staff dedicated to providing support, advocacy and linkages to services and resources.
Disease and Disability Specific Organizations	Find organizations that focus on the needs of your recipient (eg. MS Society, Canadian Mental Health, Spinal jury Alberta) for specific information, advocacy and education,
Seniors Specific Organizations	Contact your local senior's centre to find out about what kind of support they offer (eg. information referral, outreach worker, volunteers).
Health System General Health: 811 Mental Health: 211	Work with your health-care team to look for support. Social workers and case managers can be a helpful resource. Call Health Link to find your local home care number, request an assessment home care or access respite services.
Local information and distress lines	Distress or crisis lines are usually available 24 hrs a day by phone. They are a great resource if you need to talk. Many provide information and referrals to resources.
FCSS offices	Outside Edmonton and Calgary, contact your local Family Community Support Services (FCSS) office. Many have community support workers, information and referrals ports, home support programs, and counselling.
Alberta Support 1 (877) 644-9992	Provides information and referrals to benefits and support for financial assistance, disability, work-place training, etc.

TYPES OF RESOURCES AVAILABLE

Caregiver Education and Support

Caregivers Alberta, along with many other agencies, provide opportunities to connect with other caregivers, build skills to help manage care, connect with resources and learn about their care recipient's condition.

Counselling

Need someone to talk to? A number of community organizations offer low-cost or sliding fee scales for individual and family counselling.

Financial

Federal and provincial programs offer some financial supports (disability tax credit, family caregiver tax credit, and/or EI benefits, compassionate care leave). Subsidy and benefit programs may help you or your care recipient.

Health

Specialized clinics for particular conditions can offer extra support (eg. Pain Clinic, Special-Sized Geriatric Clinic, Mental Health Services).

Housing options

There are a number of alternative housing options available; group homes, seniors housing, community living supports, and continuing care. There also home modification programs that will provide equipment to make your home safe and more accessible.

Legal

Non profits, lawyers, and government can offer support for legal/financial document writing (personal directive, enduring power of attorney, wills). Seek general personal planning advice from legal, and financial specialists.

Living in community

Local, and private agencies offer support to individuals wishing to remain at home including: home maintenance, food delivery, transportation, home care, equipment/adaptation, home modification.

Respite

Respite gives caregivers some time off. The most common types are day programs and home care which are available through Health Link or from private providers. Overnight respite and weekend camps for children with disabilities are other options.



Caregivers Alberta

Programs and services

Caregiver Intake Services

It's easy to get started. Contact us to get resources and referrals, or schedule a one-on-one coaching session.

9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. | Monday to Friday

780.453.5088 | 1.877.453.5088

support@caregiversalberta.ca

Peer Support and Educational Workshops

We offer weekly peer-support groups for caregivers, including a men's group and multi-cultural group.

Educational workshops run throughout the year. Topics include: finding financial support, journal writing, navigating care systems, end-of-life planning and managing stress, to name a few.

One-on-one Caregiver Coaching

- Speak with a Caregiver Coach about your caregiving situation
- Receive guidance to help identify your needs, find resources and plan next steps
- Learn strategies to stay healthy while busy and under stress

COMPASS for the Caregiver

A four-week, interactive workshop series that helps you address the challenges of caregiving. You'll learn about the caregiver role, ways to reduce stress and caregiver burnout, grief and loss, how to respond when relationships are under strain, and navigating the health system.

Week 1: Being a Caregiver

Week 2: Managing your Stress

Week 3: Balancing Relationships

Week 4: Navigating the System

We help you find the resources, community and support you need.



Contact us

1.877.453.5088

support@caregiversalberta.ca

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Follow us @CaregiversAB

